

**Minutes Of The
AOS Trustees Meeting
Houston, Texas
Friday April 24, 2009**

The spring meeting of the American Orchid Society was called to order at 10:33 AM, in the Hilton Hotel North in Houston, Texas by President Carlos Fighetti.

Proof of due notice was demonstrated on page 74 of the February 2009 issue of Orchids. Acting Secretary Karen McBride called the roll.

Officers Present: Carlos Fighetti, Norman Fang, Lowell Jacks, Karen McBride, Chris Rehmann, William Rhodehamel, Art Moore

Trustees Present: Howard Bronstein, Jim Butler, Dennis Dayan, Gail Furniss, Aileen Garrison, Deane Hall, Bob Henley, Carol Holdren, Terrie Hunt, Alan Koch, Nancy Mountford, Ben Singer, Taylor Slaughter, Max Thompson, Linda Wilhelm, Regina Wilson

Trustees Excused: Ben Singer, Harry Gallis, Bob Henley, and Terrie Hunt

Trustees Not Excused: None

Staff Present: Jim Jordan, Ron McHatton, Jim Watson

Declaration of Quorum Acting Secretary Karen McBride declared a quorum.

Appointment of New Secretary

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve Karen McBride as Secretary
following the resignation of William Riley**

Appointment of new Assistant Treasurer

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve Nancy Mountford as Assistant Treasurer
following the vacancy created by Karen McBride becoming Secretary**

Appointment of New Trustee

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve Ernest Hetherington As Trustee
following the vacancy created by Karen McBride becoming Secretary**

Recognition of Visitors

President Fighetti welcomed the visitors, including past president Marvin Gerber, Honorary Vice President Tom Sheehan, committee chairs (David Horak, Ted Kellogg, Greg Allikas, Lois Holmes, Sandy Svoboda, Cindy Van Der Wiele, Deane Hall, and Ma'Lyn Sheehan), incoming committee chairs (John Ingram, Gary Kraus, Rhonda Heide, and Jackie Wood) and incoming trustees (Frank Smith and Tim Brooks).

Approval of Minutes of Longwood Meeting

President Fighetti then asked for any corrections to the minutes from the Fall Meeting in Longwood Gardens on October 18, 2008. Three corrections were made. The President then called for a motion to approve the minutes.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
Unanimously VOTED to approve the minutes of the
October, 2008 members meeting in Longwood Gardens as provided.**

Approval of Trustee Teleconference Meeting

President Fighetti next asked for any corrections to the minutes from the January 9, 2009 Trustee Teleconference. There being none the President called for a motion to approve the minutes.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the minutes of the
January 9, 2009 teleconference meeting as provided.**

Reports of Standing Committees:

World Orchid Conference Trust Report

Peter Furniss

No actionable items – see attached report for details of other activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Research Committee

Dr. Cynthia Van Der Wiele

Cynthia outlined additional possible members for the committee and some of the issues relating to this committee's future direction.

Cynthia requested approval for the award of \$27,000 three-year Furniss fellowships to two candidates recommended by her committee. President Fighetti then called for a motion to award these fellowships.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to award a Furniss Fellowship to Murielle Simo of Cameroon**

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to award a Furniss Fellowship to Lorena Endara
at the University of Florida**

Following a discussion of two committee proposals for \$1,000 and \$500 prizes at upcoming conferences and word that a donation was being made to fund these prizes, President Fighetti called for a motion to award these prizes.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to award a \$500 prize for the best student poster/paper at the American Society for
Horticultural Science 2009 Annual Conference to be held at the Millennium Hotel, St.**

Louis, Missouri July 25-28, 2009 and a \$1,000 award for best student poster at the first International Orchid Symposium, organized by the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) Orchid Working Group to be held January 12-15, 2010 in Taichung, Taiwan.

See attached report for details of other activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of Special Funding Committee

Marian Sheehan

Marian Sheehan gave a three-word report: "Auction Saturday night!"

Following some discussion, a motion was made as to the disposition of the proceeds of this auction.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to designate the proceeds of the upcoming auction
to the AOS general fund.**

The President then called for a motion to approve this report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Conservation Committee

Dr. David Horak

David reported that due to the monetary situation of the AOS, most of the emphasis on their meeting was on the committee's strategic plan and on the ongoing work of its task forces.

News has come to the committee of a botanic garden in Holland established in 1967 facing closure due to plans to construct a hospital. The committee requested that the AOS send a letter of support for the continued existence and preservation of the botanic garden.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to have the AOS send a letter of support for the continued existence and
preservation of this botanic garden.**

Following a discussion of various aspects of the Conservation Committee's proposed strategic plan, it was the consensus that it should receive the board's approval.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the Conservation Committee's
proposed strategic plan.**

See attached report for details of other activities of this committee.

The President then called for a motion to approve this report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Library/Archives Committee

Lois Holmes

Lois reported that no items discussed by the committee needed approval. She went on to say that this would be her last meeting as Chair of the Library/Archives Committee and that she had enjoyed the years. This was followed by applause.

See attached report detailing activities of this committee.

Report of the Affiliated Societies Committee

Carol Holdren

Two societies have applied for affiliation and were approved by the ASC: Tampico Orchid Society, Tampico, Mexico and the Puerto Rico Orchid Association

President Fighetti called for a motion to approve these three societies for AOS affiliation.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the affiliation of the Tampico Orchid Society, Tampico Mexico
and the Puerto Rico Orchid Association
with the American Orchid Society.**

The Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium in concert with the Peninsula Orchid Society, the Richmond Orchid Alliance, the Tidewater Orchid Society and the Virginia Orchid Society have invited the American Orchid Society Trustees to hold their Fall 2010 Trustees meeting in Virginia Beach, Virginia October 26 through November 1, 2010. This will include a symposium and no show. Judging will occur as part of the schedule and there will be Vendors. The ASC approved the invitation to be presented to the AOS Trustees.

President Fighetti called for a motion to accept this invitation.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept the invitation by the Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium in concert
with the Peninsula Orchid Society, the Richmond Orchid Alliance, the Tidewater Orchid
Society and the Virginia Orchid Society to hold its Fall 2010 Trustees meeting.**

Upcoming Future Meetings have already been approved for Fall 2009 at the Huntington Botanical Garden, San Marino, CA and Spring 2010 Oklahoma Orchid Society, OKC, OK. Hosts are still needed for the Spring and Fall of 2011 and 2012.

Carol reported on a fundraising project: The ASC will be raising funds for the AOS general fund by promoting the sale of an AOS pin. The cost of the pin is \$20 and will be advertised in orchid society newsletters and through AOS reps. They will purchase the pin through the AOS web site or by telephoning the AOS.

See attached report for details of other activities of this committee.

President Fighetti called for a motion to accept report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Publications Committee

Greg Allikas

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Technology Committee

Ted Kellogg

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Education Committee

Rhonda Heide

Rhonda stated that in order to create a vehicle with which to recognize the work of young people, they have come up with a plan to create a youth ribbon achievement award which will be included with judging kits. There is \$250 in their budget for this and they have a pledge for the remaining \$250.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the creation of a youth ribbon achievement award
to be included with AOS judging kits.**

The committee also wanted to reward members of the judging community and others for their efforts in orchid education by creation of the American Orchids Society Service in Education Certificate with three conditions for recognition.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the creation of a
American Orchids Society Service in Education Certificate.**

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Membership Committee

Frank Smith

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Web Committee

Sandra Svoboda

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Judging Committee

Dr. Gary Kraus

Several actionable items were presented to the BOT. See attached report for details of all the activities of the JC.

Gary requested approval of personnel changes detailed in the attached report. President Fighetti called for a motion to approve all the personnel changes proposed by the JC.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the personnel changes outlined by the Judging Committee.**

There followed a discussion of two requests for change in status to Retired Emeritus Judge. President Fighetti called for a motion to approve these changes.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the change to Retired Emeritus Judge of
Lloyd Burns (Shreveport) and A.G.Tharp (Pacific South).**

Gary then requested approval of the following handbook changes recommended by the Handbook Task Force of the Judging Committee:

This involved the following paragraphs: 1.1; 1.5; 2.3 (5) & (9); 3.2.1 (9) & (16-20); 3.2.6; 3.2.8; 3.2.9; 3.3; 3.5.2; 3.7 (1-3); 4.2.1.2 (9); 4.2.4 (2); 4.6 (16 & 18); 4.9.3; 4.9.4.2 (1-5) & (7); 5.5.3 (1&5); 5.5.3.1 (1-6); 5.4 (1) & 6 (b); 6.2 (11); 7.1.1-7.1.10; 7.3.2; 7.5; 7.5.1-3 and numerous grammatical and spelling corrections throughout the Handbook. The specific changes are described in Appendix 3 of the JC agenda. The major changes involved the responsibilities of the center chair, the process for placing a judging center on probation, the process for removal of a center chair, the definition of an award which has been cleared and is ready for publication, and update both changes in the Style Book.

Description of the major genera updated and changes in award descriptions with similar changes in the Style Book.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the changes recommended by the Handbook Task Force
of the Judging Committee.**

Gary next requested approval of the following handbook changes recommended by the Ethics Task Force of the Judging Committee:

4.9.4.3 of the Handbook concerning lesser disciplinary sanctions was changed to allow the JC chair also to initiate such sanctions.

4.6 (3) of the Handbook concerning attendance at business meetings was changed to:
Attend each biannual business meeting and any duly called business meeting of the judging center committee unless excused by the judging center chair. Disciplinary action will be invoked if a judge has two or more consecutive unexcused absences. Excused absences

shall be limited to no more than two in a row; further consecutive absences would be unexcused.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the changes recommended by the Ethics Task Force
of the Judging Committee.**

Gary next requested approval of the following handbook changes recommended by the Working Task Force of the Judging Committee:

4.2 of the Handbook related to the appointment of judges was changed to include student judges: *All judges, including student judges, are appointed, elevated or terminated by the Board of Trustees upon recommendation of the JC. The JC in turn acts upon recommendations of the judging center committees, upon provisions within this Handbook, or as it deems necessary for the proper and ethical administration of the judging system as described in Paragraphs 2.3(3) and 4.8.*

A judge must be permitted to participate in any AOS-sanctioned judging activity (wherever held) beyond the mere signing of the judging summary sheet for that event.

4.6 Responsibilities: To retain status as a judge, a ~~certified~~ judge must:.....

4.9.1 Leave of Absence

A ~~certified~~ judge in good standing, who, The leave of absence of a **student judge or** probationary judge does not extend the five-year termination rule.

4.9.2 Resignation of a Judge:

A judge who wishes to resign shall submit a written notice to the judging center committee, which shall in turn notify the JC of the resignation. A certified judge who has resigned may apply to any judging center to reenter the judging system after a minimum waiting period of one year from the time the resignation was accepted. If a two-thirds majority of the accredited judges at the next scheduled business meeting of the judging center committee of the center to which the resigned judge applied, recommends approval of the reentry request, it must be forwarded to the JC for its recommendation and then to the Board of Trustees for its decision.

If approved, reentry must be made at the probationary judge level for a period to be determined by the judging center committee, but not to be less than one period between biannual Trustees Meetings. If the request for reentry is denied, the resigned judge may apply for reentry to another judging center or may re-apply as a student judge.

A student judge who has resigned may re-apply to any judging center as a student judge after a minimum waiting period of one year.

4.9.3 Retirement of a Judge:

Retirement is a special status, which may be conferred upon an accredited judge who has served satisfactorily for a minimum of five years as a certified judge but for reasons acceptable to the JC is unable to continue to serve. The judge must submit a written request for retirement to the judging center committee. If the request is rejected, the judge may submit the request directly to the JC. This procedure is not to be confused with termination, suspension or resignation. A retired judge shall no longer participate in AOS judging or judging center meetings but his/her name shall be retained on the permanent list of retired judges. A retired judge may apply to any judging center to reenter the judging system after a minimum waiting period of one year from the time the retirement was approved by the Board of Trustees. If a two-thirds majority of the accredited judges at the next scheduled business meeting of the judging center committee of the center to which the retired judge applied, recommends approval of the reentry request, it must be forwarded to the JC for its recommendation and then to the Board of Trustees for its decision. If approved and the total duration of retirement did not exceed two years, reentry may be made at the same level as when the judge retired. Otherwise reentry must be made at the probationary judge level for a period to be determined by the judging center committee, but not to be less than one period between biannual Trustees Meetings. If the request for reentry is denied, the retired judge may apply for reentry to another judging center.

4.2.4 (2) Senior Judge voting rights

No Change

5.3 (5) Clarification of before judging

*At any time before judging **the plant in question** has started, the chair of judging may advise an exhibitor that the flowers he proposes to submit are not in proper condition to warrant judging at this time. The inflorescence may be withdrawn and will not be considered to have been judged and may be submitted for consideration at a subsequent judging session or show.*

4.6 (2) Responsibilities:

To retain status as a judge, a certified judge must: Fulfill his/her judging requirements by participating in at least eight judgments in

his/her assigned judging area each year, at least four of which must be at the monthly judging sessions in his/her assigned judging center. A maximum of 4 out of center judgments may be attended to reduce the center's number requirement by 2 (½ credit per judging). Any judge, who has not attended the minimum number of judgments during the preceding calendar year, shall be denied voting privileges on any matter at the center's business meeting in the current calendar year. A judge should judge annually at one or more AOS-sanctioned judging activities outside the area served by his/her judging center.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the changes recommended by the Working Task Force
of the Judging Committee.**

Following discussion of the moving of student judges to be under the auspices of the Board of Trustees, the issue of past student judges came up.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to cover all students in the past under AOS auspices**

Gary reported that the issues that had caused one judging center to be put on probation had been corrected and that the JC recommended that the Trustees take it off probation.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to take the judging center currently on probation off that status.**

Gary next requested approval of the following handbook changes recommended by the Species Identification Task Force of the Judging Committee:

The following Handbook changes were recommended:

Moved unchanged from 5.5.2.1 (5) & (6)

(1) Taxonomic verification of all previously unawarded species is required, no matter what award is granted. Although taxonomic verification need not be presented prior to an award's being granted, if it was previously obtained, it should be accepted when the plant is judged. Awards will be held in a provisional status until identification is complete.

(2) If any certified judge on the judging floor questions the identity of a species being considered for any award, then the award will be held in a provisional status until identification is complete.

INSERT NEW

(3) Taxonomic Verification Options

a) Taxonomic verification which had been previously obtained as noted above;

b) Submission of a flower to an AOS recognized taxonomic authority

c) Referring the necessary plant measurements and images to the Species Identification Task Force (SITF), as obtained by the judges and photographer at the judging session;

d) Referring the necessary plant measurements and images to the SITF as obtained by the exhibitor or designee.

(4) The exhibitor must designate on the plant entry form the desired identification option as listed above. If no designation is made or if the judging chair does not believe that the judges or photographer in attendance have the capability of implementing the SITF protocol, option b) will be implemented.

5.5.2.3 Species Identification Task Force

The SITF, under the responsibility of the JC, is a team of volunteers with an interest in species and taxonomy committed to getting the correct names on species awarded by the AOS judging system in a timely manner. The SITF is on the list of AOS taxonomic authorities. The team consists of a chair and selected members who as a group research and reach a consensus on the correct names of specimens submitted. They will use their own resources but if necessary will contact others in the orchid community who can assist with correct identification. The hope of the SITF is to do the identifications based on photographs and information obtained from the specimen, eliminating the need to ship plant material. Doing identifications this way requires more information than provided by one award slide and one short description. The SITF asks that whoever submits a specimen to the SITF for identification provide extra photographs and measurements, using the forms and guidelines the SITF provides, and using the Descriptive Terminology Section of AQ Plus if the terms are unfamiliar.

7.5.2 (7) Additional measurements may be necessary for species identification if the flower is submitted to the SITF. These should be recorded on the SITF information form.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the changes recommended by the Species Identification Task Force
of the Judging Committee.**

Gary next requested approval of the handbook changes recommended by the Contested Awards Task Force of the Judging Committee as detailed in the attached report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve the changes recommended by the Contested Awards Task Force
of the Judging Committee.**

Gary next requested approval of a Center Chair change as detailed in the attached report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to approve Helmut Rohrl as Chair, Long Beach in Pacific South.**

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Nomenclature Ad Hoc Task Force

Ron McHatton

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the President

Carlos Fighetti

It is difficult to start enumerating all of the events that have happened since our last meeting. I can positively say that from that moment on, many changes have been made to correct the fiscal crisis that the organization is in. The largest one was the uncertainty created by the conversion to the new management information system with the budget. Thanks to the diligent work of the Finance Committee, we have now a clearer picture of the financial state of the organization.

But the crisis extends beyond the financial situation that required management to make cuts in personnel and expenditures, as now we are forced to operate on a cash basis and adjust expenditures to the income received on a month-to-month basis, it also has affected membership that in spite of the generous efforts made by some individuals, board members and others, has seen our membership drop to the 16,000 member level, and has not stopped dropping. And we also have a credibility crisis with the membership, as rumors about going out of business, or about selling our assets, including the building surfaced everywhere. I hope that by issuing of the State of The AOS Report we have started to address this problem. This report is significant in the sense that for the first time, the membership is informed of what it is happening both good and bad.

We have also had some significant improvement, especially in our communication with the membership. The magazine continues to be published on a monthly basis, although with a different look and bit thinner, but with improved content; our Website has come a long way in functionality and content, a new forum is on the air, and webinars are now being tested and will soon be added to the list of programs available to the membership. Also, the AQPlus computer program, the main tool to the judging system, continues to get better and with improved images. All of these have been accomplished because of a good working relationship between our professional staff and our volunteer committees.

Finally we are seeing the results of the yearlong Board meetings about reshaping the future of our organization. One of the results is the Strategic Plan, which is in the last stages of being completed. And I want to thank all the committees for their diligent work in providing us with their individual plans on a timely basis, And, I also want to recognize the work by the newly formed Governance Committee that it is providing the Board with the guidance that is needed in order for the organization to succeed, and presently working with the Board in writing a new set of bylaws for the organization.

There is still much work to be done, as we still need to continually look at our expenses, to stay in line with our revenue, build back our reserves, complete the Strategic Plan, rewrite the bylaws, write new Board policies, and develop a comprehensive membership plan. I am confident that all of this will be done and eventually we will emerge as a stronger organization.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Finance Committee Report

D. Lowell Jacks

Since the Finance Committee was not meeting until the day after the Trustees Meeting, Lowell referred everyone to the attached report which had been sent to all ahead of the meeting.

Please see the attached report.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Governance Committee Report

Taylor Slaughter

No actionable items – see attached report detailing activities of this committee.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Executive Director

Jim Jordan

It would be hard to argue that the 2008/2009 fiscal year hasn't brought its share of challenges to this great Society. From every perspective, we have been dealing with crisis after crisis, hoping and praying for solutions that will get the Society back on course. The reasons for us finding ourselves in this situation have been well documented in the State of Society brief and I will not take time to dwell on them here. Suffice it to say that mistakes have been made and I take responsibility for not being a better steward. I could very easily create a list of challenges and the steps that I took to correct the situation, but, as my high school baseball coach used to say, excuses are for losers. I can assure you that I have given you everything I have in terms of management skill and experience to bring the AOS out of this perfect storm. While the liquidity crisis we find ourselves in was a long time in the making, the past two years with a faltering economy have seen things get worse. Despite the current situation, I am still confident that the AOS can succeed. However, we simply cannot do things the same way and hope for a different result. That is the definition of insanity. As we approach the 2009/2010 fiscal year, I am imploring you all to become part of the solution.

I don't want this report to simply be a "doom and gloom" one. To heed the advice of Chris Rehmann regarding the positive things we have done, we are making progress. Our systems are finally not controlling us and from a management perspective, I can now spend some more time on strategic direction and not just operations. Our new Finance Manager, Dianne Gorbach, has stepped up and has taken on our financial reporting allowing us to use less outside services and provide the necessary management reports for us to make better decisions. The new forum was introduced in March and we now have over 400 members who have registered, a number that is growing everyday. The website content is improving thanks to the efforts of the Web Committee, Greg, and Ron. The e-newsletter has been well received and shows that improved communication to our membership is valued and sought out. The publicity we have received about the garden and gift shop closings have spurred record attendance to the facility and have energized the local Members and visitors to get involved. We successfully upgraded iMIS to take advantage of the latest software improvements without any disruption in service. We were able to save close to \$7000 a month with the changes we made to *Orchids* with practically no negative comments, a tribute to the quality of the stories and photos that are still second to none. AQ Plus has reached over 1400 subscribers and continues to get

better with every release and is a needed source of additional revenue to the Society. The Board stepped up and invested the time and money to tackle a comprehensive strategic plan that hopefully will guide us and our Members to the future.

These accomplishments cannot be underestimated. Each of these took a commitment of time and effort to accomplish a favorable result. Our financial situation is no different. We need a formal plan with the support of all of us in this room to see our way through this challenge. It will take a combination of new revenues including contributions the help get us over the top. I am confident that we can get it done. My only area of concern is the ability of the entire group to build consensus. This is one of the most difficult Board tasks to accomplish and it requires a lot of effort. In a group process, conflict is inevitable and if kept within bounds, even desirable. However, we need to work on our process to make sure that we are clearly on the same page on the decisions that we make and how we communicate them to the membership.

There is one other area that I feel we need to work on. I think we are taking a much more narrow approach to the development of our strategic plan largely as a result of the exercise that took place in Wilmington which I unfortunately did not make. Let me explain. When I first interviewed for the job of COO, I looked at the American Orchid Society as being a brand that denoted such traits as expertise, knowledge, quality, concern, volunteerism, passion, sharing, commitment, legacy, and innovation. All of these traits are critical to the value of AOS. My concern is that we are concentrating so much on the tactical side and cutting costs that we are simply hoping that the economic markets will improve and we will go back to be the Society we were in Cambridge. In my humble opinion, this could be a recipe for disaster. There is little doubt that given the financial pressures confronting the Society that we simply cannot follow a “business as usual route”. In a world buffeted by change, many associations have learned that the only way to survive is by innovating, that the only stability possible is stability in motion. Many of you may remember the business best seller *In Search of Excellence* by Tom Peters. The premise of the book, published in 1982, was to showcase the best 43 companies and what traits they exhibited that made them so. Two years after *In Search of Excellence* reported on forty-three of the “best run” companies in America, fourteen of the forty-three firms were in financial trouble. The reason, according to a *Business Week* study: “failure to react and respond to change. How many of you remember the phrase “As GM goes, so goes the country”. Who would have thought that we are actually talking about the reality of GM reorganizing under the bankruptcy statutes? Unfortunately, this is where we are right now.

My view is that we are forgetting who we are and we are not focused on the right targets. We are a brand and we should start acting like it. For example, we have been discussing a membership strategy since I got here and the only marketing program we have been successful with has been the WOC Special and Garden Memberships. We currently are following a path that is exactly the same one that has existed since 2005 and before that with the exception of the pricing. We have reported that our retention rate for one year Members is very poor but we have done very little to understand why. We attracted over 200 Garden Members with little or no marketing or for that matter very little benefit other

than admission to the gardens. In my mind, a membership program should allow a transition through the customer's level of comfort with the hobby. Ron's newsletter was largely viewed as a great added value because it was simple and easy to understand. Our beginning classes are always the most popular. The question is why we don't have a comprehensive membership program that appeals to every level of orchidist.

Orchids today are more popular than they have ever been. However, this is not a new phenomenon. In researching this, I found a reference in an article that appeared in the very first edition, June 1932, of the Bulletin. In an article by David Lumsden on *Cypripedium* Culture, he makes this observation,

“Many persons are orchid-minded today, and more and more persons each year are embarking on the sea of Orchidology, many more would embark but hesitate to do so because someone at sometime or other has stated that orchid culture is so difficult and that plants are so exacting in their requirements that to try to cultivate them would be to court disappointment.”

This struck me as being very accurate. However, today this is not the case. Orchids are the second most popular blooming plant second only to the poinsettia. Customers are buying orchids at prices unheard of ten years ago yet once the bloom is gone they are simply discarded like a garden mum plant. What if we were able to get that customer to rebloom that plant? Do you think they would take a liking to the hobby? Think about the first time you saw that orchid you cared for throw off that new spike? We have more information about the care and handling of the orchid species than any other organization in the world and we should be able to develop a membership plan that can tap into this strength. Rather than to give \$5 to every affiliated society for the Members they bring us, we should bring them Members in hopes of cultivating a future AOS Member. We should expose the buying public to our wealth of information and partner with affiliated societies to cultivate more interest in the hobby. We should constantly scream from the mountaintops that we are orchids! How do we do this? Here is simply a concept:

- Provide a free AOS Membership to all non-AOS Members of affiliated societies. Have them sign up on the web and agree to allow us to send them emails and solicitations from our commercial Members. As part of the membership, provide them with a quarterly newsletter on basic orchid growing tips and allow them access to certain sections the website i.e. culture sheets. This would be an excellent opportunity to see if we could convince many of the mass market orchid growers to include information on their tags about www.aos.org. Think about it if we could tell an advertiser that we have over 50,000 names in our database.
- The second level would be web based membership. They would get a monthly more advanced e-newsletter, access to the Members Only section of the website, reciprocal admissions, discounts from commercial members, and discounts from AOS. The cost of this membership would be \$30 a year. There would not be a magazine.
- The third level would be the Heritage level. This would include all that we have in the second level but would include the magazine. The cost of this membership would be the same as it is now at \$60.

- The fourth level is the Burrage Society. This would be the top level in the organization. This level would get all of the benefits previously mentioned. In addition, they would get advanced opportunity to purchase heritage plants from outstanding growers before the general public. They would have the opportunity to participate in special tours and a Burrage Society annual banquet at the Annual Members Meeting free of charge that would include some of the most notable names in orchidology. They may be invited to an annual speaker's day as our guests here at AOS Headquarters. They would get a President's Newsletter, AQ Plus, Lindleyana, and as many other benefits we can muster. This level might pay \$1000 a year.

I am not saying that this is a final recommendation or that this is the way we have to go but at the very least it is a start. As a group we should be sitting down face to face and strategizing the possibilities. As I mentioned, my concern is that we will concentrate on cutting costs and making the budget work rather than building on our brand that another six months will go by and we will be no better off then we were when we started. The sand in the hourglass is falling fast and we need to concentrate on building the value of the organization and stop apologizing for the past. The past is strictly prologue and we need to start focusing on the future. I have always said the membership drives the organization. If we can think outside the box and at the same time keep in mind the tremendous value we can offer, we will be successful.

The first step is to concentrate on the priorities of the organization that should come for the strategic plan. I have provided an outline of what I feel they should be.

1. **Financial Plan**-We need to obviously put together a budget that is realistic and conservative from a forecasting standpoint. As I mentioned, I believe we are at a crossroads. I do not believe that the path is as simple as deciding whether the gardens remain open or not. The path is whether we sell the visitors center and move elsewhere or try to make it work. We need to take a look at the contribution margin produced by each activity and see if it is worth maintaining. The plan should include consideration for repayment of restricted funds, a formal development plan that provides clear benchmarks for Board and staff to accomplish during the year based on the direction we decide, and staff objectives that can be measured against the plan.
2. **Membership Plan**- We need as formal membership plan that considers all stakeholders and includes the financial impact of any actions. It would be prudent to include some research funding to go out and talk to various stakeholders to test the validity of our assumptions.
3. **Development Plan**- We desperately need to build our unrestricted reserves and the only way to do this is to build relationships with our current donor base and our potential donor base. We should establish an estate plan and look to outside grants to help bolster our reserves. We have to be specific with our ask which means that the strategic plan should identify the specific capital and operational needs that require funding before we proceed with execution.
4. **Strategic Plan**- We are off to a good start but much needs to be done to make the plan a living document that we follow. I would suggest a team that includes

both volunteers and staff concentrate on completing this plan and presenting it to the Board in October. Included in the plan should be the three previous plans that include financial, membership, and development even though those plans may already been approved and execution is ongoing.

Most if not all of these strategies need to be started immediately. In the case of the financial plan, we have already begun to formulate the budget for 2010 given the Board's previous decisions. However, there is something that I would like for all of us to keep in mind. If one of the key discriminators is the orchid information that we have, then we need to continually demonstrate that we are the preeminent source and a source to be trusted. There are hundreds of fringe sources of information that are nipping at our heels and if we are going to stay number one, then we need to constantly look to innovation, relationship building, and intelligent risk taking to keep our edge.

In closing, I would like to share with you part of a letter that was sent by George Putnam who was founder of the Putnam Funds, an AOS Member, and a recent visitor to the Gardens. He talked about challenge that we have and the opportunity that we are presented with:

“AOS had many publics: professional growers, the judging programs, scientists in the field and local societies as well as current hobby growers. Each will support the Society and its publications, but alone will not help broaden its base of support. As seen in the orchid shows there is a tremendous public interest in orchids. The Society's challenge is to translate that interest into support and the AOS garden (and especially greenhouse) is one important way to harness that potential.”

The point is that we do have a lot of different stakeholders each with their own needs and opportunities. The common thread is their interest in orchids and they look to us because of the brand value that has historically been ours. I, for one, think that our challenge is to find ways to deliver that value better than anyone else and to create an organization that can be sustained for decades to come.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Strategic Plan Discussion

Carol Holdren

Carol Holdren reported on progress being made on the Strategic Plan.

Town Hall Meeting Discussion

Carlos Fighetti

President Carlos Fighetti led a discussion about timing and procedures to follow during the Town Hall Meeting.

Report of the Director of Education & Regional Operations

Ron McHatton

Re: Report to the Trustees, Spring 2009 Meeting, Houston Texas

Outreach Activities:

We continue to be strongly represented in the orchid community. Since the fall Longwood Meeting, I have represented the American Orchid Society at a long list of events including the RHS Subcommittee on Orchid Hybrid Registration (SCOHR) meeting, the fall Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium where we provided two lectures, two South American Shows and a strong presence in California. In February I spoke as invited speaker at 4 shows in the Los Angeles basin, manned a membership table at the Pacific Orchid Exhibition in San Francisco and Santa Barbara. The California speaking tour garnered, through the generosity of Norman Fang/Norman's Orchids, 32 memberships from four societies. These were 1/2 price memberships. For the two shows, Norman provided budded *Phalaenopsis* clones to be provided as an incentive to join. Five additional new memberships were obtained from the San Francisco show (one of them a member from 15 years ago who's impressed enough with my being out in the public that she's coming back) and 11 at the Santa Barbara show. As Chris Rehmann pointed out a few weeks ago, people will join if the price of the membership is lower than \$60.00 and offers of free plants or other incentives aren't nearly as effective.

Chris also noted in his update to the Board the point of a membership for children. This came up from a discussion I had with Chris regarding the Santa Barbara Show. There were four children under the age of 12 with a keen interest in orchids and the American Orchid Society (they were buying not their parents). Our current membership structure doesn't provide for a membership other than the regular \$60 one for these people. The existing student membership is applicable only to High School and College and must be substantiated with a copy of the student's ID card. We should seriously consider a membership for very young children and one for intermediate age ranges. Toward this end, Sandy Svoboda and I have now pulled 4 people together to address membership content and develop materials and will approach the board with a specific recommendation.

Our impression in, to borrow an expression from Art Moore, the hinterlands continues to improve and there is a general impression that we are trying to listen (more below) and make necessary changes that benefit the entire membership. The most common response to the news of potential closure of the public facility is to reiterate that "...it doesn't benefit anyone outside of Florida and if that's what's necessary to keep costs down and ensure the organization's survival, then so be it." In fact, many of the rumors we anticipated are not being propagated and I found no one who personally believed we were digging up the plantings for sale.

The strongest common theme I still hear is that we don't do enough to listen and membership is too expensive. We do things, like take 16 pages out of the magazine, in a

vacuum rather than ask the membership what it wants. There are many people who would have rather had a bimonthly done well than a reduction in the magazine so it can still be published monthly. It's hard to respond when someone says "you don't ask because you don't want to know the answer." Cost is another issue although the new newsletter and webinars go along way toward increasing value of society membership (see below).

Related to this perceived lack of responsiveness to our membership is a historical problem with customer service that, at least to some extent continues today. Whether it is a pervasive problem or an issue of perception it is, nonetheless, a problem that we need to address. We have the capability to notify our AQ Plus subscribers of the progress/status of periodic updates but we fail to avail ourselves of this communication tool. We are still working out the kinks in this distribution and direct communication to subscribers with regard to manufacturing delays, defects in workmanship at the duplicators, etc. would go a long way toward improving our customer service reputation. In addition, delivery of magazines in South America is a huge problem in terms of public relations. The root cause lies in their mail delivery system however the problem to overcome it is really ours. If we don't, we risk losing most if not all of our South American members. Then it really becomes our problem because of our lack of responsiveness.

Regionalization

I currently have in place the following group of direct regional contacts:

Pacific Northwest – Jim Rassmann, Ingrid Ostrander, Abu Salleh

San Francisco Bay Area – Carol Zoltowski, Ken Jacobson

Greater Los Angeles – Denise Claycomb, Robert Lauri

San Diego County – Ron Kaufmann (also linked through Robert Lauri and the Southland Show Comm.

Mid-America Orchid Congress – Mark van der Woerd, Ken Pedersen

Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Association – Mavis Klehm, Tom Larkin

Northeast – Dennis Dayan, Maurice Garvey, Rita Cohen (Joint President's Council)

Mid-Atlantic – Admiral Tom Ward

Florida – Joe Bryson, South Florida Leadership Council

This system of contacts does work as a two-way communication link and continues to get stronger, especially in the Mid-west and far West. When I ask that the group assures something gets discussed in their societies or distributed through their societies' newsletters this gets done promptly and the group does bring forward issues of concern. This is another example of how my travel directly impacts improving communications and our working relationship with our members and our affiliated societies.

How do we move this forward? There is little incentive for these groups to form SFLC like formal organizations beyond those that already exist like the Southland Show Committee. If we really want to create strong regional links to our affiliated societies I would strongly urge the Governance Committee to consider taking a page out of

local/state political organization's playbooks. I would propose that we seriously consider reserving 9 seats on the board to be elected as Regional Trustees, distinct from the remainder of trustees elected at-large. These Regions could roughly be Canada, Hawaii, Pacific Northwest, Pacific Central/South, SWROGA, MAOC, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South (including Florida), and South America. We may at any time have Trustees from these various regions but they aren't formally elected to represent those regions. These regional trustees would provide a vehicle to voice regional issues such as the difficulty with magazine delivery in South America directly to the Board. These regional trustees would provide tangible benefit to regional organizations.

The worst that can happen is that a regional trustee turns out to do nothing or becomes a disruptive force. In the former case, it is incumbent on the region to replace a non-performing trustee. In the latter case, the individual is only one voice and certainly less damaging than working behind the scenes.

Once this happens, I would suggest that the network of regional individuals in place become working members of the Affiliated Societies or Membership Committees

Orchid Alliance Project (OAP)

About two years ago, we signed an agreement with Evolution Art Group, LLC to create the Orchid Alliance Project. This first came to the AOS through a letter to Lee about 3 years ago. It did not reach the Executive Committee until September of 2006 and consequently the Board until after Lee's departure. The agreement obligates us to advertise the project (hence the OAP ads in Orchids Magazine and on our old website), provide educational information related to the subject species/hybrids, and help to promote the project as necessary. In exchange, the contract specifies that the OAP donate 5% of the proceeds of art sold. In actual fact, we are receiving 10%. In the interim period between March 2006 and early 2007, the OAP lost a major collaborator (Hewlett-Packard). Since that time, the project has been slow to get off the ground and so far has generated only about \$1200 in donations. That appears to be changing. First, the project has acquired two major collaborators; SICIS Corporation, a major tile-art manufacturer and Hahnemuehle Paper, a very long established fine-art paper manufacturer developing "green" paper lines).

Chris Rehmann, Taylor Slaughter, EAG representatives and I met recently with the Executive Director of Longwood Gardens and his staff to discuss the feasibility of mounting a major OAP multidisciplinary art show as part of next year's Longwood Extravaganza. While no commitment was obtained, I second Chris's comment that we felt better about this meeting than any other meeting where we've gotten nothing. We will be meeting again in the near future to pursue possibilities including a scaled back exhibit that will work within Longwood's framework. The risk is that we will lose one or the other major collaborator without a workable venue.

As a result of the OAP's exposure at the Longwood/SEPOS show, four original (two sets of 2 originals) paintings have been commissioned by Lisa du Pont Mosely. These four

paintings will sell for between \$75,000 and \$95,000 netting a donation to AOS of \$7,500-\$9,500. In addition, the cover of the April magazine has resulted in another commissioned piece with a value of about \$12,500 (\$1,250 donation to us). Of even more importance is the fact that the buyer of this piece is a former member of the board of the Missouri Botanical Garden (MOBOT), knows Peter Raven (the current ED) and wants to investigate an OAP art exhibit at MOBOT.

Newsletter

Our new electronic newsletter is off to a roaring start. The first one emailed in February had a 46% open rate and a 36% click-through rate. The March issue open rate was above 50% with a greater than 40% click-through rate. At the Longwood/SEPOS show, copies of the two newsletters were available for potential members to examine and the response was very positive. Our members are noticing the promotional piece in the magazine and I receive a steady stream of emails from members who want their email address added to our distribution list. I want to thank Greg Allikas and Kathy Fiegel for their collaborative efforts. Greg has been terrifically responsive to getting material up on the web in time to issue the newsletter.

The effort is not without issues however. We are still working the kinks out of the email distribution but Informz is aware of the problems.

AQ Plus

We have received the first batch of images/award data from the Taiwan Orchid Growers Association and all of the awards from 2008 from the Taiwan Paphiopedilum Society for inclusion in AQ Plus. We have also secured an agreement from the Cymbidium Society of America to work toward sharing their awards and images and I'm close to securing a similar arrangement with the Japan Orchid Growers Association. When in London in May for the SCOHR meeting I intend to discuss the Australian Orchid Council involvement with Ian Chalmers and try to finalize that link as well.

Educational Webinars

Many of you know that we tested our first webinar a couple of weeks ago. While technical difficulties got in the way of my presentation (for those of you who attended, the PowerPoint problems were the tip of the iceberg – the problem started with catastrophic damage to my PC 10 minutes before show time) I believe that we were successful in demonstrating the potential power of this medium. Webinars offer us the ability to offer classes, how-to demonstrations and all sorts of other educational opportunities to our far-flung membership and the presentations are recorded and archived effectively forever on the host site as well as later on ours. One of the problems faced by small societies is the cost of bringing in speakers. Webinars provide the opportunity to gather a society together with a PC and a monitor and, for very little cost, have a name speaker for the evening. We have more work to do with regard to preparation and training but Sandy Svoboda, Greg Allikas and I are exceptionally excited

by the possibilities and truly believe that this technology will be key to adding value to AOS membership.

Species Identification Task Force

As the result of a number of conversations between Patricia Harding, Carlos and me at, and following, the WOC in January of 2008 regarding how to handle the cost of species identification from Selby Gardens and the frequency of incorrect identifications, the Species Identification Task Force (SITF) was formed. The purpose of the SITF is to provide a no-cost alternative for identification of species given provisional awards. The current members of the SITF are: Patricia Harding (Chair), Lisa Thoerle, Steve Beckendorf, Jay Norris, Tom Mirenda, and Ron McHatton. Centers or exhibitors who choose to avail themselves of our service email to awardid@aos.org detailed images of the awarded flower/plant as well as detailed measurements and description of the plant. I log in the entry and forward the images to Lisa Thoerle, our blog mother, who uploads the images to our private blog. The members of the task force add additional uploaded supporting documents such as herbarium records, reference materials and the like all building toward a valid determination. The task force brings into the deliberation any appropriate experts who may be required to make a final determination and Patricia reports to the appropriate center chair our findings. The blog then serves as a permanent archive of the images, descriptions and scans of the supporting documentation providing a complete electronic file. We are still working out with the JC the details of implementation but to date the SITF is used exclusively by two centers, Toronto and Pacific Northwest and will continue to grow in importance as other centers discover how easy it is to use. We have now identified 40 taxa in 28 genera. By providing this service we have reduced the time of species identification, reduced the cost to our exhibitors and provided our judging system with valuable new information.

Award Challenges

I've included with this report a copy of the report I submitted to the Judging Committee. I include it here because at least three plants included in it; *Paph. spicerianum* 'Marshall', AM/AOS, *C. intermedia* 'Stephen's Pride', FCC/AOS and *C. walkeriana* 'Kenny', AM/AOS will be controversial and you should be aware of the changes. All three of these clones are of hybrid origin. In the first and last, we believe we can identify the hybrid; *Paph. Leeannum* and *C. Snow Blind*, respectively. The other is problematic and no clear answer is apparent.

Award Support

Following the October meeting at which the Pacific South Judging Center was placed on probation (along with two other centers), I have spent significant time working with Joan Bailey, a student in that center (now effectively their awards secretary), helping her set up the program, tutoring her in its applications and working to improve their submissions. Thanks to her efforts, that center caught up on over a year backlog of summaries from the four judging sites in the center in a matter of about 6 weeks. This student continues to

work very hard to submit summaries in timely fashion and improve the quality of their descriptions. She has also become a staunch supporter in the region.

I also continue to review and edit all incoming summaries for correct names, identifications, parents, and adherence to our AQ style guide. This remains a significant, time consuming task averaging 3-5 day-equivalents per month and, in some cases nearly twice that. Two centers, Atlanta and Great Plains, now submit nearly flawless summaries and the submissions from Houston have improved remarkably. The problems I correct range from completely incorrect names like *Lepanthes beligeri* instead of *Lepanthes berlineri* to effectively incoherent descriptions that are often missing whole sections of the description. As an example, one recent submission for a *Paphiopedilum* described in detail the dorsal sepal, synsepal and the substance and texture. Unfortunately, the original, handwritten paperwork includes only those segments as well making it effectively impossible to correct.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Report of the Public Garden Committee

Deane Hall

See attached report detailing activities of this committee. Following the delivery of the report and some discussion a motion was made to keep the Gardens open. This motion was tabled in order to give the Finance Committee time to examine the report in light of the upcoming budget for 2009-2010 and make a recommendation to the Board.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept this report.**

Unfinished Business — None

New Business

It was reported that we have received dues for 1476 new members.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees
VOTED to accept these memberships.**

At approximately 6:00 PM a motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

**Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Trustees unanimously
VOTED to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,

Karen McBride, Secretary